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AUTHOR Mushi, Selina L. P.

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed aspects of educating young children in Tanzania and then transitioning them to the U.S. and Canada, examining parents' perspectives of their children's transitions. Researchers collected data via questionnaires and interviews with 30 Tanzanian parents about 35 children's adjustment to new education systems, highlighting demographics, schooling and transfer experiences, presence or absence of educational aspirations in both contexts, choice of school in the new education system, ratings on school and home related factors, and specific observations and concerns about their children's educational development. Data analysis indicated that Tanzanian children who came to North America to continue their education were mostly from publicly owned schools or childcare centers, and most of them had high educational aspirations when they left Tanzania. Parents indicated that learning English and speaking it at home and the availability of learning materials were the major advantages of coming to North America. Factors that prohibited smooth transition included inability to speak English fluently (especially at school), lack of enough teacher attention, lack of close and strong relationship with teachers, lack of learning content, reduced enthusiasm about school, and feelings of inferiority among peers. The paper discusses findings according to language and cognition, the Tanzanian child's perception of race, and confusion between racial label and socioeconomic background. (Contains 16 references.) (SM)

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOME ASPECTS OF EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN IN TANZANIA AND IN NORTH AMERICA: TANZANIAN PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Paper to be presented at the AERA Annual Meeting
Montreal, Canada, April 19-23, 1999.

Selina L. P. Mushi, Ph.D.,
Department of Teacher Education
Northeastern Illinois University.

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Abstract

Children moving from one country to another to continue their education at an early age, face serious adjustment challenges. Smooth transition from one education system to another depends on many factors, but parents play an important role. This paper is a comparative analysis of some aspects of educating young children in Tanzania on the one hand and in the United States and Canada on the other. Parents' perspectives on their children's transition to the new education systems are examined and discussed. Data were collected through questionnaire and interviews. The data included demographic information, schooling and transfer information, presence or absence of educational aspirations ("dream") in both contexts, choice of school in the new education system, ratings on some school and home related factors, and parents' specific observations and concerns about their children's educational development. Each set of data was analyzed separately using appropriate software and methods.

Findings indicated that Tanzanian children who came to North America to continue their education were mostly from publicly owned schools or childcare centers, and most of them had high educational aspirations when they left the country. Parents indicated that learning English and speaking it at home and availability of learning materials were the major advantages of coming to Canada and the United States. Factors that prohibited smooth transition into the new education systems included inability to speak English fluently especially at school, lack of enough and directive teacher attention, lack of close and strong relationship with the teacher. Others were lack of focus on learning content, reduced enthusiasm about school, and feelings of inferiority among their peers.

The findings are synthesized and discussed under three sup-topics, namely, language and cognition, the Tanzanian child's perception of race, and confusion between racial label and socio-economic background. Suggestions for parents and teachers are provided, as well as recommendations for further research.

INTRODUCTION

As the globe is becoming smaller in terms of communication and mobility, people continue to migrate from one country to another, usually from the less advantaged countries to the more advantaged countries. The high immigration rates to the United States and Canada bring with them various aspects of concern, including educational issues. One such issue is the education of children who have been educated elsewhere and who transfer into these countries to accompany their parents on studies, work, or just prolonged periods of stay due to diplomatic missions.

A child educated in another country faces the need to adjust to the specific education system he/she transfers to in the United States or in Canada. This adjustment may require changes to match the particularities of a certain state or province, a certain school system, and perhaps a certain teacher. The experiences that the child acquires in the home country may act as barriers or as promoting agents in the child's pursuit of education in the United States or in Canada. Such experiences are acquired in early childhood education in their home countries, often without knowing that the children may have to continue their schooling in North America.

This study examined the experiences of children educated in Tanzania in their early years and who accompanied their parents to continue their education either in the United States or in Canada. Tanzania is chosen because it is the author's home country where she has extensive experience in schooling (kindergarten up to Masters of Education degree) and teaching at all levels, (from Kindergarten through university level). The United States and Canada are chosen because the author has graduate schooling as well as teaching and evaluation experiences at different levels in these countries.

When an opportunity arises for a Tanzanian family to come to the United States or to Canada for studies or work, it is seen as a blessing, not only to the nuclear family, but also to the whole extended family. The first and foremost advantage considered is the educational opportunity for the parents, the children, and whenever possible, to the members of the extended family. Other perceived advantages are related to income. It is

expected that if the parents can obtain jobs, the income will meet the basic needs of the family abroad. Learning and using English is seen as another major advantage especially for the younger children who will not only learn the language in the classroom but also get an opportunity to use the language with peers in school and at home. For the older children, availability of computer networks and access to information worldwide is another emerging advantage.

However, many genuine questions arise after the children settle in the new school systems. Some of these questions are about dealing with culture shock, integration into the local education system, general educational expectations, options for promoting personal educational excellence of the child, self image/self esteem and other adjustments within the family itself. This study sought answers to specific questions related to these issues. The paper is organized into five major sections: 1. The problem and research questions, 2. Conceptual framework and review of literature, 3. Methods and procedures, 4. Findings, discussion, and suggestions for parents, 5. The need for further research.

THE PROBLEM

Tanzanian parents' appreciation of opportunities to study and/or work in the United States or in Canada seems to be obvious, since these opportunities are seen as blessings in many ways, especially with regard to the education of their children. How and whether the children actually achieve these "blessings" are issues that are yet to be empirically established. It would be unrealistic in a research project like this one to try to establish conclusively if those children finally achieve their educational expectations in their adult life. Instead, the study focused on the trends (if any) that might be emerging as those children settle in the new education systems. The researcher specifically sought to establish the general characteristics of the children who came to the United States and Canada between the years 1991-1999 after they started school in Tanzania. She also sought to document parents' views about their children's education in the new systems in comparison to their initial perceptions; whether there were changes in their educational expectations ("dream") once they settled in their new schools; and what advantages and disadvantages were experienced. Also, the researcher wanted to find out parents'

strategies for dealing with their children's transition between two very different education systems, in effort to achieve the best educationally.

Research Questions

This study was guided by six major research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of children who come to North America (United States and Canada) following their parents, and who transfer into the new education systems? These characteristics include age, gender, grade level, level of schooling reached in Tanzania, type of school attended in Tanzania, and educational expectations of the child (the "dream") while in Tanzania.
2. What do parents perceive as the promoters or hindrances of smooth transition of the children's learning from their home education systems to the new education systems?
3. What trends are emerging with regard to achieving the expectations held by parents and/or the children prior to the transfer?
4. How do parents compare their children's cognitive, social, emotional and language development, as well as the general educational performance in the two contexts?
5. What major advantages or disadvantages have been observed by parents after transferring young children into the new education systems?
6. What strategies do parents use to try to achieve the perceived "blessings"?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher conducted this study with the following assumptions in mind:

1. The tender age (up to early primary years) is crucial in the development of the whole child; and consistency between school and home values will enhance the child's learning better than contradiction between the two.
2. Child development theories are mere guides to understanding, and interacting with, children. They are not rules that should apply to every child in every situation.
3. For any adult working with children: parents, teachers, care givers etc, understanding the individual child is a major first step to successfully interacting with that child.

4. Cultural variations – language, value systems, personal preferences and beliefs are not deficits within the child, but factors that the adult working with the child has to be aware of in interacting with the child and helping the child to learn.
5. Language enhances thought processes. Any given language is a tool for communication, and not in itself an indicator of higher or lower cognitive processes compared to other languages. As long as a child speaks a certain language, no matter what that language is, the child's part of brain that supports language is developing normally. This first language will be the foundation for learning other languages. The greater the number of languages a child is able to speak, the more likely that the brain will be stimulated linguistically, formulating more synaptic connections.
6. In a school setting there are fundamental principles and policies that affect each child, albeit to a differing extent depending on the child's individual circumstances.

Theory

Different theorists present milestones of child development cognitively (Piaget, 1963, 1971; Vygotsky, 1962; Freud, 1990), emotionally (Erikson, 1963, 1982), socially (Bandura, 1973, 1977, 1986, 1989). The individual child, however, is one unique entity that the teacher, parent, or care giver interacts with. The different perspectives of the theories, together merely inform practice. Certain aspects of one theory may be more applicable to one child than to another, or the general theoretical approach may not work for a particular child, for various reasons.

For example, Piaget's cognitive development theory describes what the child would typically understand and do at a certain age. However, a typical Tanzanian child aged five may understand more complex concepts than the theory suggests, depending on that child's experiences that present opportunities for mental stimulation. The five-year old child in the Tanzanian context may have to prepare his/her own meal, or take care of younger siblings. This child will better understand the complexities of preparing the meal (e.g. mixing ingredients, correct proportions, etc), or what a younger sibling's cry means (hunger, discomfort) better than a five year old who does not have these experiences. The more children face problems to solve the more they become engaged in trying to solve

those problems. This mental stimulation (Trawick-Smith, 1997) further promotes the child's opportunity to construct knowledge. Learners actively construct their own knowledge. Young children struggle to make their own meanings from their experiences. Even in classroom situations when the teacher or caregiver presents the same content, learning materials, or learning situations to an entire group, each child learns differently.

Social learning theories highlight individual differences in behavior within the same situation or stimuli. This understanding suggests that an individual's behavior is determined by both the particular situation and the inner qualities the individual brings to the situation (Rotter, Liverant, & Crowne, 1961; Bandura, 1973; 1977; Mischel, 1976). The inner qualities include abilities, values, expectations, plans, motivations, and goals. The same situation or stimuli, for example, a class test, elicits different responses from different children depending on the qualities and interpretations they attach to the test (Mischel, 1976).

Bandura's "social cognitive theory" (1986; 1989) focuses on the individual's determination of own destiny, and consciously making informed future choices. Goal directed actions take the lead, the individual believes and demonstrates that he/she can actively control the events that affect his/her life, rather than sitting back and accepting whatever the culminating circumstances bring along. Generally speaking, this understanding is hammered into Tanzanian children at a very early age, even before they start schooling. The average Tanzanian parent directs his/her child's ambitions to a great extent, knowingly or unknowingly – by showing the children that some ways of life lead to success while other ways of life are bound to failure. To put it mildly, parents try to "scare" their children from potential failure in their future life as adults.

Unfortunately, due to an underdeveloped economy, there is only the education system to turn to, for a possible bright future. Regardless of the fact that only a few children get access to secondary school (Grades 9-12) let alone high school (Grades 13-14) and higher education, most parents still push their children to the extent that the child realizes at a very early age that he/she has to succeed educationally, to have a bright future.

Typically, the school system as well as the entire social structure is perceived to carry no blame if the child does not succeed. This situation alerts the child to start "dreaming" of a successful future. Since there is only the highly structured education system to compete through, the child prepares for the struggle from very early years. By the time the children start pre-school programs at about age four or five, they have aspirations, though not clearly defined, to refer to as their bright future ("dream").

Early childhood education programs in the United States and in Canada seem to be more flexible in terms of the child perceiving future goals and commitment to achieving them, or even having any goals at all at such an early age. Upon coming to the United States or Canada, the Tanzanian child and the parents believe that the "dream" is coming true – chances of achieving it are increased to a great extent, due to abundant resources. Adjustment into the flexibility of North American early childhood programs may affect the perceptions of those dreams in positive or negative ways. Smooth, careful transition into the new education systems as well as support are necessary, if the child is to maintain the "dream".

The Tender Age and Consistency Between Home and School Values

In North America, the traditional model of connecting home and school involved parents taking the role of helpers. Parents or other family members help with supervising lunches, field trips, helping in the classroom and other school related activities. The more contemporary approach to connecting home and school for young children suggests involving the parents (or other family members) more as collaborators, joint decision makers, and "partners" who hold a share of the responsibility to facilitate effective learning of the child, and making continuous assessments of the learning. Bennett (1990) presents the social systems theory that supports this view. Puckett and Black (1994) suggest ways, strategies, principles and instruments to practically involve parents as collaborators rather than mere helpers in their child's learning process. Such collaboration most likely will lead to more consistency between home and school. This consistency will give the child clear indication as to what is expected of him/her within the family, in school and in the wider social context.

The Tanzanian traditional view of parent involvement in their children's education differs from North American models. In Tanzania, parents and teachers seem to be on one side, and the child seems to be on the other side – the teacher and parents are always right, there is only the child to be wrong. The teacher takes the lead, telling parents how well or poorly their child is doing. If a child is doing poorly in school the parents tend to "push" the child to do better, and to demonstrate the improvement as soon as possible. This makes children scared of both parents and teachers. At a very early age children learn to do what the teacher says. Children may fear being reported to their parents that they are not doing well.

A different trend of parent involvement seems to emerge. The well-to-do parents tend to defend their children more than the poorer parents. Some well-to-do parents argue with the teacher and may try to show the teacher that the child is right and the teacher is wrong, even in the presence of the child, something that would be considered very unethical in the 1960s and 1970s. Ironically, children from such families may tend to do poorly in school; however, since the parents are economically advantaged, they always find ways of helping their children educationally. Problems arise when the children are not selected to enter secondary school and beyond, because the examinations are extremely competitive. However, this is beyond the scope of this paper.

A child coming from Tanzania to the United States or to Canada, may tend to suddenly see unimaginable freedom in the education system – talking back to the teacher, arguing with parents, speaking spontaneously in class, etc. However, at home such freedom may not exist, since the parents may still maintain their Tanzanian perception of parents' role and the link between home and school. The child may begin to get mixed messages that will disrupt learning.

Cultural Differences, Understanding the Individual Child, and Fundamental Principles of the School

1. Can the classroom teacher understand the culture and prior experiences of each child?

2. How many cultures should the teacher or care giver learn before he/she can effectively interact with children from different cultural backgrounds and help them learn?
3. Which cultures should be included in the early childhood curriculum, and who selects them?
4. How much time should the teacher or caregiver devote to the individual child?
5. What if the child's culture clashes with the fundamental principles and policies of the school?

There are no definite answers to the above questions. However, it will probably be clear to anyone who has been involved with children that the teacher (or care-giver) cannot learn the culture of each and every child. Even if it were possible it would certainly be more difficult with larger groups than with smaller groups. In Tanzania, there are about 123 different ethnic groups, each with its own language and many dialects, value systems and beliefs.

Tanzanian classrooms are generally large. For the levels of pre-school and first grade, one teacher may have a group of up to 40 children; and for third grade through seventh grade, up to 80 students in one room. Many children do not attend preschool for various reasons. In large and medium size cities the teacher can expect to have a wide variety of cultures represented in the class. This is because parents come from rural areas to work in the cities. So the children can come from any of the 123 ethnic groups. The teacher cannot learn and internalize the cultures of 40 children in the class. However, the teacher has four important things:

(a) Clear unbiased understanding of the existence of the different cultures and sub-cultures,
(b) Positive attitude towards those cultural variations, respect and acceptance of the cultures and sub-cultures – they are not seen as problems,
(c) The national language, Kiswahili, which almost every child speaks even before starting pre-school, and
(d) Perception of the child's first language as an important tool for communication, and not a representation of superior or inferior cognitive processes – a child who does not

speak Kiswahili, still stands a fair chance of demonstrating understanding of content through another language and/or actions - the teacher provides for this.

Upon entry to secondary school however, lack of proficiency in English, the medium of instruction, will obviously affect the performance. (Mvungi 1982) found a strong positive correlation between proficiency in English and overall school performance in Tanzanian schools. Strict measures are taken to teach communication skills using English. These are mandatory, intensive English courses before the secondary school program begins.

The major cultures that are evident within the environment can be included in the early childhood curriculum as selected by parents and educators to signal the presence of many other cultures. The teacher (or care-giver) spends as much time for each child as it is practically possible (depending on many factors); and if an individual child's culture clashes with the school pillars, something is probably missing in those pillars.

The foregoing discussion shows that expecting the teacher or caregiver to learn and internalize the cultures of all children in the class, may be unrealistic. What the teacher certainly needs is a positive attitude towards cultural variations, and readiness to understand each child and any cultural aspects that feature as hindrances to, or promoters of, the child's learning.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Initial Contacts: The researcher contacted Tanzanian parents in the United States about their children's adjustments in the new education systems. There seemed to be some consistency in the changes the parents said were taking place in their children at school and at home, especially in the early years. The study was then designed to seek information about these changes and analyze it more systematically. The research attracted many Tanzanian parents- some living as far away as Germany. Unfortunately, due to limited resources, only the parents in the United States and Canada could be included in the study.

Target Audience: This study targeted Tanzanian parents presently working and/or studying in the United States and in Canada, who have transferred their young children to the new education systems. The findings might help to inform new Tanzanian parents who find themselves in similar situations in the future. The author hopes that North American teachers who might be trying to understand Tanzanian children in their classes will find this information somehow useful.

Data Collection: Data were collected by use of questionnaires, and where needed, follow-up interviews were conducted. Informal and formal discussions via telephone and electronic mail further informed the researcher about the responses. The data collected were mainly demographic information, schooling and transfer information about the children, the children's initial educational aspirations, choice of school in the new education systems, ratings on some school and home-related factors, and parents specific observations and concerns.

Time Frame: The data collection period started in July 1998 and ended in March 1999.

Data organization and analysis: Each set of data was organized and analyzed separately using appropriate software, to determine emerging answers to the research questions. Details of the findings are reported in counts, percentages, averages, and themes arising from content analysis. Correlation coefficients and scatterplots indicated that there were no systematic differences related to age.

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

A total of 35 children from 30 families were involved in the study (Table 1). The sources of information were the parents. The findings are organized in the same order as the research questions.

Table 1 about here

1. General characteristics of the children

The general characteristics of Tanzanian young children who accompany their parents to attend school in North America include:

- Current age ranging from 4 – 12 years.
- About equal number of boys and girls.
- Level of school reached in Tanzania varied from pre-school to third grade
- Most of them attended public schools in Tanzania (only 3 attended private schools, two girls and one boy).
- Thirty of the 35 children had high educational expectations when they left the country – each of them had a "dream" (Table 2)

Table 2 about here

2. Factors that promote or prohibit smooth transition into the new education systems

(a) Parents suggested two major factors that enhance their children's smooth transition into the new school systems:

(i) *Availability of learning materials and equipment*. Children came with enthusiasm to learn and they found materials that are interesting to them, and equipment to support their learning.

(ii) *Very high motivation to learn English*. The children loved to speak English with their parents, peers and/or siblings. One parent said:

> My son does not mind making mistakes, he pronounces words his own way, he just keeps speaking English all the time, and we encourage that. He asks very intelligent questions that make us think seriously. We are surprised in school he is grouped with the slower learners in the class, just because his English is not yet very good.

(b) Factors that emerged as prohibiting smooth transition were: inability to use English fluently all the time and self awareness of this inability. North American cultural concepts such as TV cartoons, children's books, children's stories which are totally unrelated to their previous experiences, relaxed, spontaneous atmosphere in the classroom where children "talk without permission" not

understanding the teacher because of language barrier and lack of focus on content. Others included lack of enough teacher attention and direction, lack of close and strong relationships with the teacher, and a sense of guilt especially when the children felt they were not doing very well in English language skills.

Emerging Trends

1. Maintaining the "Dream"

Most parents indicated that it was too early to determine if the high educational expectations held by parents and their children were being achieved. However, several parents indicated that their children "lost the dream" as they settled in the new education systems (Table 2). Only 19 of the 30 children (with a "dream") maintained their "dream", and even these tended to talk about their dreams less often. One parent stated:

> My child does not seem to think getting highly educated is a matter of life or death as she used to think while she was in Tanzania. I keep reminding her that if it was not for my higher education I obtained from Tanzania, we would not have come to majuu" ("majuu" is used to mean "overseas/in developed countries").

2. Learning English

All the parents expressed their delight about their children learning to speak English faster than they did when they were in Tanzania (see Figure 1). However, some parents were concerned that their children seemed to be picking sub-standard English (slang) from their peers.

Figure 1 about here

3. Social and emotional development

With regard to social and emotional development, some parents thought their children had learned to demand reassurance that they were loved by the parents (this does not happen in Tanzania). The children listened more and talked less, especially with peers. Interaction with peers decreased on the overall, due to language barriers and lack of

enough safe, open space where children could interact naturally as they did in Tanzania. Boys seemed to be affected more than girls in sociability/interaction with peers in the United States (see Figure 2)

Figure 2 about here

4. Advantages and disadvantages of coming to North America

The major advantage of coming to North America as observed by parents in this research was their children's opportunities to learn and use English in everyday life in school and at home. Several disadvantages were observed: lower child confidence, lack of focus on learning content and not being able to communicate with the teacher as fluently as and as clearly as the children want need to. Also, some parents indicated that teachers did not seem to pay enough attention to their children at school. For this reason, the parents kept very close contact with those teachers, trying to get feedback as often as possible about their children. Another disadvantage was children's perception of school compared to their perception of the same in Tanzania. Parents indicated that in Tanzania their children loved school; they "looked forward to going to school every day – sometimes they got up too early to prepare for school". It seemed that this enthusiasm was reduced a lot for boys who came to the United States (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 about here

Some parents in the United States were concerned that their sons were developing feelings of inferiority at school. One parent wrote this about his third grader:

> My son keeps telling me that the other children think him and three others do not have good toys or a computer at home. Whenever he talks about computer games at school he is not believed. And if the teacher talks about helping children from poor families who may not have good toys at home, the other children in the class would look at the four children or tease them after class, about being poor. When I visited his class I found out that the other three children were also black, and the four of them sat together at one corner of the class. May be the other children judged only on the basis of race.

With regard to general school performance, most parents in Canada were satisfied that their children were doing well, unlike in the United States (Figure 4)

Figure 4 about here

The researcher thought it was important to find out how the children felt about their teachers. Children tend to learn better from adults that they like and trust. Parents thought their children liked their teachers a lot (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 about here

With regard to general behavior of their children, parents thought it was acceptable (see Figure 6). However, some parents indicated that they had to be "on guard" all the time to discourage cursing and use of bad language by their children. Some parents complained that the children seemed to pick bad language and cursing words from their peers. Although they would not curse in the presence of their parents, if they were sure the parents were not listening, they did.

Figure 6 about here

Parents' Strategies

Strategies used by parents to ease the transition of their children into the new education systems included: maintaining a very close relationship with the child's teacher, cross-checking with the teacher about assignments taken home, having family friends with children of about the same age, reading and translating stories to the child, social activities involving children from different backgrounds, structuring the child's activities, watching less television especially during weekends and holidays, and constantly supporting the children and collaborating with their children's teachers. Parents insisted on maintaining good extra-school relationships with the children's teachers. One parent stressed:

> We will do whatever it takes to have the teacher pay specific, constructive attention to my daughter, otherwise our family would rather go back home and ensure she gets good education".
>
> One couple in the United States had sent their son back to Tanzania because they thought he was not doing well educationally, and "his self esteem was declining".

DISCUSSION

This discussion synthesizes the issues raised by parents under three major headings: (a) Language and cognition, (b) The Tanzanian child's perception of race, and (c) Possible confusion between a racial label and socio-economic background.

Language and Cognition

All parents indicated that learning English was a major advantage for their children. It seemed however, that some of the children's teachers might not have taken note of this "big step" observed by parents. In a group of 15-20 children it may be difficult for the teacher to realize how much improvement one child is making in using English. It happened that all the children in the study were in classes where there were few or no other international children. If all the other children were fluent in English, the teacher might tend to think the few who did not speak English well were slow learners, or had developmental problems. If the teacher had had no experience with children from other countries and how they might demonstrate effective learning even without perfect use of English (probably, the teacher's only language), she/he might tend to confuse inability to speak perfect English and inability to speak and learn.

Tanzanian children may speak up to three languages by the time they start pre-school (if they also speak English already, that might be a fourth language). They know which language to use when, with whom, how and for what purpose. The child would speak to a grandmother and grandfather in Kichaga for example (if they come from Kilimanjaro); he/she would speak in Kipare to the other set of grand parents (if they come from Upare) and Kiswahili, and may be English, to the parents. The child makes these quick decisions spontaneously without consultation. This does not indicate low cognitive capabilities; in

fact, the quick decisions are more likely to indicate higher than lower cognitive abilities. The child can explain things, count and reason using any of the languages. The more the brain is stimulated, the more connections (synapes) are formed, and the higher the cognitive abilities. The challenge to decide instantly which language to use with whom, or to quickly switch to another language to explain something, must stimulate the child's brain to a great extent.

Therefore, inability to use English correctly is a process of adjustment, and not an indication of low level of cognitive abilities. The teacher should help the child in the process of adjustment by encouraging more communication (exchange of meanings) rather than merely assessing the form of that communication (English words and syntax). Some teachers may perceive another language as a hindrance to learning in English. It is not unusual to hear an exchange similar to this among teachers:

Teacher A: *What is the problem with Mrisho? He does not seem to do well in Math.*

Teacher B: *He speaks another language.*

If Mrisho speaking another language is seen as primarily the problem, then efforts to help Mrisho are likely to focus on eradicating the other language. If Mrisho speaking another language is seen as the foundation for continuing learning using a different medium (English), then efforts to help him are likely to focus on what Mrisho can do using the first language and gradually helping him to do the same, and even more using English. The first language is not part of the problem, it is the major part of the only solution in helping Mrisho to learn effectively using English.

The Tanzanian Child's Perception of Race

Historical race relations especially in the United States seem to have left behind a strong sense of categorizing people first and foremost on the basis of color. This type of categorization is a completely new phenomenon to a Tanzanian child. Typical Tanzanian children coming from cities like Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Moshi, Morogoro, Dodoma, Songea, and other large and medium size cities, will certainly have gone to school with other children who look different, and sound different – children whose ancestors were European, Arabic, Asian, or native African. However, the children do not see themselves

being categorized by race or color. They might notice differences based on socio-economic backgrounds – how well they dress, whether they are driven to school by the family driver or they take the bus, whether their parents are highly educated and have well- paying jobs or they do petty businesses, whether their lunch is brought warm to school or they don't have any lunch at all.

It comes as a big shock to the Tanzanian child when a sense of inferiority is directly or indirectly forced onto her/him , based on dark skin color. At first the child may not even notice it, but with the passage of time, conscious and sub-conscious actions from peers (and may be from the teacher) will make the child perceive that her/his skin color places her/him in a somewhat inferior category. This perception is detrimental to young children, especially when it directly or indirectly indicates that some races are perceived as inferior to others. Tanzanian children may know how one can fight potential poverty, but not how one can be considered inferior merely on the basis of race or color.

When asked in this study what factors determined the choice of school for the child, many parents responded that they were looking for a "less racist school". One family had moved their child three times, looking for a school where the child would not be "made to feel inferior".

Confusion Between Racial Label and Socio-economic Background:

The children who accompany their parents to North America are not usually from poor families. The parents come for graduate studies, diplomatic missions or for professional jobs. These opportunities are normally acquired through very competitive processes. This implies that the parents are highly employable at home. In North America, the parents live moderate life that cannot be considered poor. If children see a dark-skin child in their class and immediately assume or imply that the child has "no good toys at home" without knowing more about the child, they would be making a stereotyping mistake. The teacher should not let this happen. The child might be coming from a well- educated African American family, or could be from another country, or could even be from a well-to-do white family, or could be from a poor family. Teachers should encourage children to

know their peers and their backgrounds to avoid making assumptions about them, based solely on how they look.

Suggestions for Parents and Teachers

(i) Tanzanian parents who bring their young children to North America should pay closer attention to them and listen to them more, try to see what they do, especially during the early transition period. The parents should maintain good relationships with their children's teachers.

(ii) Parents should carefully explain to their children any puzzling questions (e.g. the historical race relations) that the children may have, so that they can understand just enough to make sense of their new schooling and home environment. Tanzanian parents should try to reassure their children that they love them. While in Tanzania children may have no doubt that they are loved dearly by not only their parents but the whole extended family, in new situations they need the reassurance, especially if other children indicate to them that their parents do so all the time. The missing love of the extended family must be compensated for, by the parents.

(iii) Parents should keep up with their children's enthusiasm to learn English, and support them in using it at home and with peers. They will need the language for educational success. Picking up slang language is part of oral communication, even among proficient speakers. Parents should discourage it only if it dominates the child's language use.

(iv) Parents should continue to keep in close touch with the teachers to understand the new school systems and to monitor their children's transition. Parent involvement in the child's education is crucial for the learning and development of the child. Also, the parents should avoid being authoritarian. They should try not to push their children too hard. The children will be learning at a pre-determined pace depending on developmental level. The focus on content can be enhanced at home if the child is ready to learn it.

(v) Due to lack of the extended family, the children may tend to forget about Tanzanian culture. Parents should make efforts to teach them important aspects of the culture, including attitude towards school.

(vi) Teachers of Tanzanian children in North America should try to understand the children and if possible discuss the new situation with parents as early as possible to determine joint expectations between home and school. Parents may tend to expect much more than the developmental level of the child may allow. Teachers may be surprised by parents' unrealistically high expectations of their young children. It may be useful for the North American teachers to understand that the parents and their children come from a highly competitive education system in Tanzania. The parents might have constant fear that their children are not doing enough to compete within the new education system. The teachers can help parents understand the importance of developmentally appropriate curriculum.

(vii) All teachers of young children should try to discourage them from making assumptions about their peers' backgrounds based merely on how they look. Effort to understand one another will enhance learning for the entire group.

THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Three areas for further research become apparent:

1. There is need for further research on how Tanzanian young children cope with the culture shock when they come to North American schools.
2. A study comparing young children and college/university students with regard to transitions between the Tanzanian school system and North American schools would be useful. This might shed some light on differences in the adopting process, that are related to educational "dream" at a young age, and a real educational goal at an older age arising from a stronger foundation in the Tanzanian education system.
3. There is need to explore the Tanzanian parent-child interactions that bring about the high motivation to learn English fast and use it at home. This might inform parents from other immigrant cultures with different linguistic backgrounds, who are trying to get their children to learn to speak English for education purposes.

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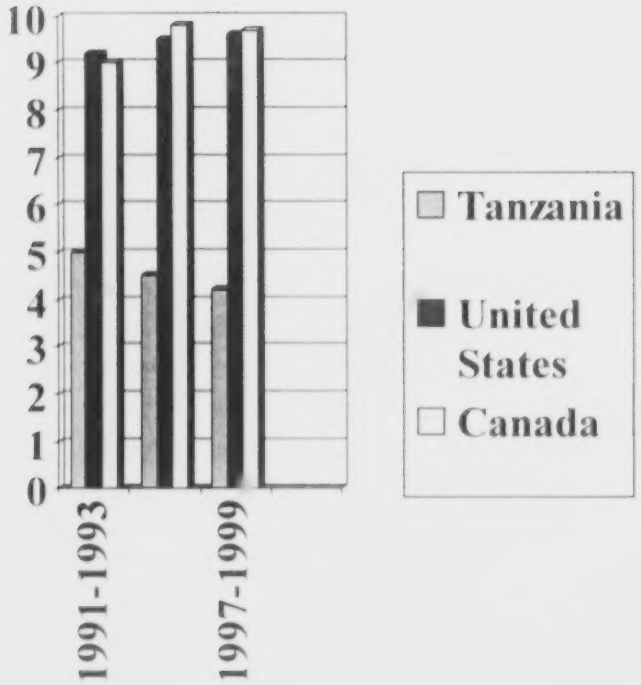
Table 1: Children Studied

	US	Canada	Total
Girls	10	8	18
Boys	11	6	17
Total	21	14	35

Table 2: Maintaining the Dream

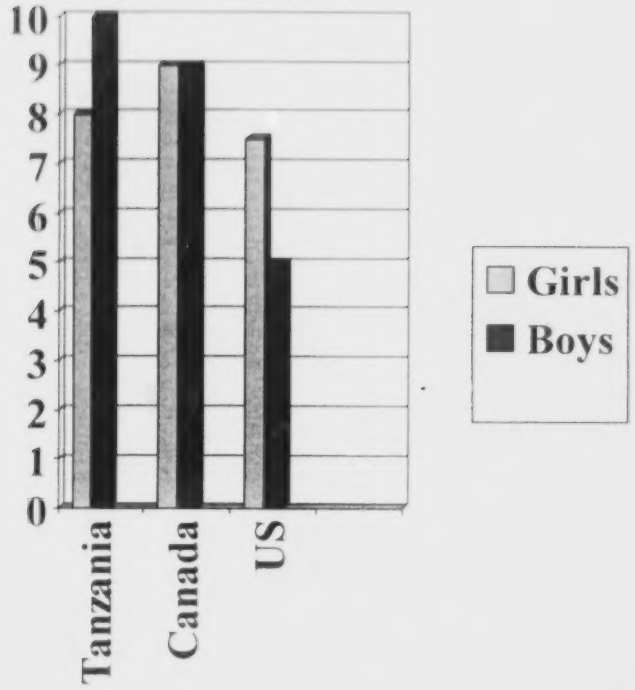
	USA		Canada		Total		Percent	
	Dr	Kpt	Dr	Kpt	Dr	Kpt	Dr	Kpt
Girls	8	5	7	6	15	11	100	73
Boys	9	2	6	6	15	8	100	53
Total	17	7	13	12	30	19	100	63

Figure 1: Learning English: Parents' Average Ratings



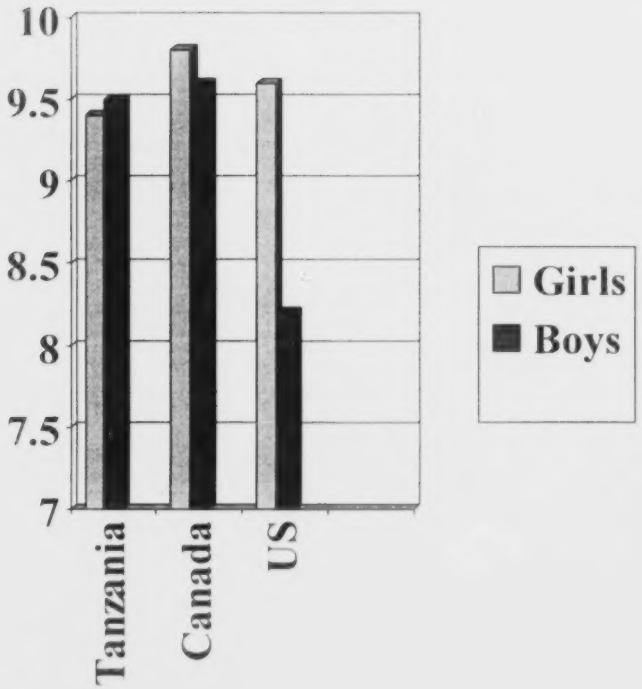
- Parents' average ratings indicated that children learned English more effectively in US and Canada, compared to Tanzania
- Learning English in Tanzania seemed to be declining

Figure 2: Sociability/Interaction with Peers: Parents' Average Ratings



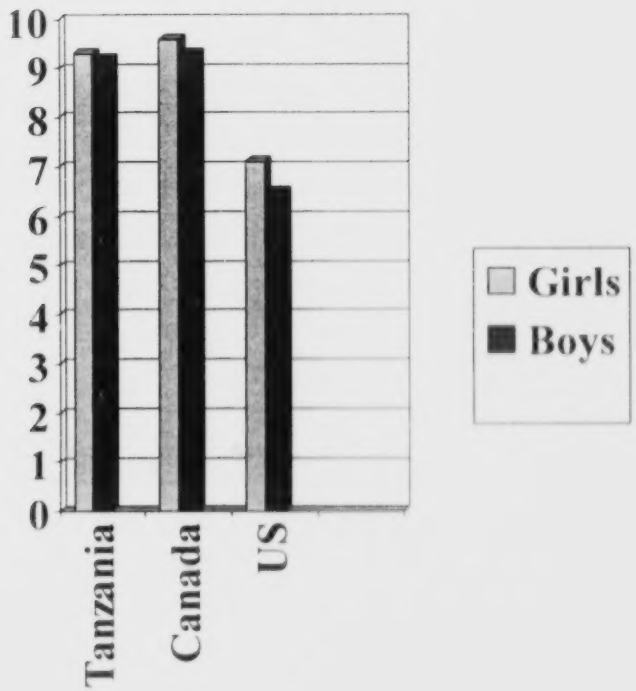
- In Tz, boys were more sociable than girls
- Equal ratings for girls and boys in Canada
- In US boys became a lot less sociable
- Girls were more sociable than boys in US

Figure 3: Perception of School: Parents' Average Ratings



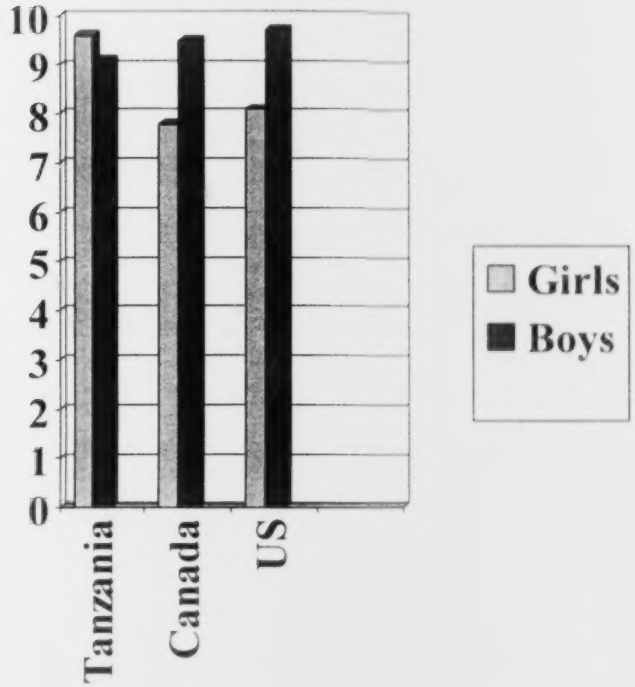
- The children had positive attitude towards school in Tz.
- Girls maintained high positive attitude in Canada and in the US
- In US boys' attitude declined significantly

Figure 4: School Performance: Parents' Average Ratings



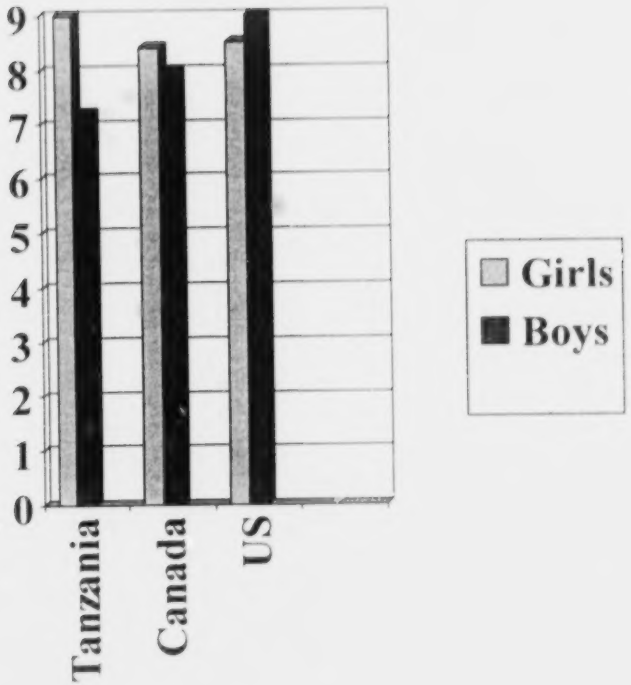
- Parents average ratings showed that performance was high in Tz and in Canada.
- Parents' ratings in the US indicated that performance was significantly poor compared to Tz

Figure 5: Do The Children Like Their Teachers? Parents' Average Ratings



- Ratings showed that most of the boys studied liked their teachers very much in all three countries
- Girls liked their teachers more in Tanzania than in Canada and US

Figure 6: General Behavior: Parents' Average Ratings



- All parents thought children's general behavior was good in all three countries
- Parents thought girls' behavior deteriorated slightly after leaving Tanzania
- Parents thought boys' behavior improved in US and Canada